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April 7, 1964

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Reports

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILE

RE: Staff meeting - April 3, 1964

A staff meeting was held on the above date to discuss various proposed outlines of the Final Report. Present were the following: Messrs. Rankin, Willens, Redlich, Hubert, Goldberg, Griffin, Slawson, Stern, Ely, and Mosk.

Mr. Rankin began the meeting by stressing the need for our best professional work in drafting the Final Report of the Commission. Mr. Rankin indicated that after giving the material considerable thought he was of the view that the transcript of testimony before the Commission and accompanying exhibits should be published at the same time as the Final Report. Mr. Rankin pointed out that there is enormous public interest in the Final Report and that critics of all motives are waiting to review our final product.

There was considerable discussion as to the desirability and feasibility of preparing the transcripts for printing as soon as possible. It was pointed out by Mr. Stern that this course of action would facilitate use of the testimony by the staff and the Commissioners during the preparation of the Final Report. It was also pointed out that the transcripts, perhaps to a greater extent than anything else, actually reveal what the staff has been doing for the past several months. There was some difference of view as to whether this could actually be done in the time allocated but everyone agreed that our best effort should be made to perform this assignment. Mr. Rankin asked that Mr. Willens and Professor Redlich prepare an assignment sheet indicating which lawyers are responsible for the review of testimony of which witnesses.

In the course of this discussion Dr. Goldberg pointed out that commercial publishers will undoubtedly publish extracts from our Final Report as soon as it is available. There was some discussion as to the possibility of securing a copyright on the Final Report through special legislation by Congress. Mr. Rankin asked that Professor Redlich consider this further.

When the discussion turned to the proposed outline there was discussion as to the respective merits of a narrative or analytical approach. Some of the members of the staff believe that it was necessary at the beginning of the report to set forth in narrative form the events of the period from November 22 through November 24. Mr. Rankin suggested that we consider such a narrative after II (Summary of Conclusions) of the outline.

Dr. Goldberg suggested amending the outline so as to include some additional matters of a historical nature. He suggested, for example, that some reference be made to past assassination attempts and to the fact that the position of the President necessarily requires travel about the country. It was agreed that both of these matters should be considered in the report at the appropriate place, although there was concern expressed that the report not be drafted as to permit the conclusion that the Commission was concluding that Oswald was a disturbed person who acted alone because of the fact that this was the case in prior assassinations.

Various other proposed changes to the substance of the outline were discussed. At the conclusion of the meeting Mr. Rankin asked that Professor Redlich and Mr. Willens consult with the staff and prepare a revised proposed outline which could be submitted to the Chief Justice later that afternoon. There was additional discussion of the proposed supplement and additional supplements were recommended. There was some discussion as to how the report should handle the various rumors or allegations which have come to the attention of the Commission. It was generally agreed that the body of the report should be sufficiently well documented to deal with other hypotheses dealing with the assassination which have been given wide currency. For example, it was agreed that the possibility of the shots coming from the overpass should be conclusively answered during the course of the body of the Final Report. As to other matters, it was agreed that rumors by and large should be discussed in categories and effort made to refute them in that fashion. It was agreed that one of the supplements deal with rumors and theories in more comprehensive form.

Professor Redlich was assigned the task of preparing a uniform system of citation for the report.

The meeting lasted from 10:15 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.